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***Hiring to Firing Podcast — Motivating Employees Who Are Introverts: Lessons From Spider-Man, Office Space, and The Big Bang Theory***

**Hosts: Tracey Diamond and Evan Gibbs**

**Guests: Stacey Chazin**

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**Evan Gibbs:**

All right. Tracy, are you an introvert or an extrovert?

**Tracey Diamond:**

You know, before we recorded this episode with our guest, Stacey Chazin, I really thought of myself as an extrovert that has some introvert tendencies. But now I'm beginning to think, to the surprise of probably everybody I know, that I'm maybe an introvert. How about you, Evan?

**Evan Gibbs:**

Yeah, I've done some, you know, course work with folks before on introversion and extroversion, and I am definitely an introvert, but I have extrovert qualities.

I really enjoy talking to people, and I like the small talk, but it really drains me at the end of the day. So I have to be alone to recharge, and as we're going to talk about in the episode, sort of lean into some of those introverted characteristics of myself.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Yeah, and it kind of leaves me a little confused because I actually get really charged by talking to people. But I hate small talk, so I don't know. We're complicated human beings.

[INTRO]

**Tracey Diamond:**

Welcome to Hiring to Firing. I'm Tracey Diamond, attorney with Troutman Pepper. And I'm here with my co-host, Evan Gibbs. Together, we tackle all employment issues, from hiring to firing.

Today we're joined by Stacey Chazin, Founder and Principal of I-Factor Leadership. Welcome, Stacy.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Thanks so much Tracey. I'm really happy to be here.

**Tracey Diamond:**

We're very happy to have you. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your specialty and how you got involved and created I-Factor leadership?

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**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah. I would love to. And the best way to do that is to quickly tell you my story. When I was younger, in school and for a good part of my career, I often heard that people thought I was antisocial or even aloof. But I really didn't connect with those words. What I did know was that I found large crowds to be exhausting. I preferred to have a small group of friends rather than a whole cadre of people to spend my time with. And that my best relationships and even my best work came from times and circumstances when I could go deeper, and take my time, and be more focused.

And then I think it was in my late 30s I started learning about the notion of introversion and a light bulb went off for me. I realized that my preferences, my approach to doing things and my comfy place in the world made me unique. And I started to stop feeling badly about those things and realized that there's a word for who I am. And that is I am an introvert. And I started really leaning into that.

Fast forward a bit and I've become quite a leadership junkie. I'm fascinated by the way that our natural preferences, whether it's introversion, or extroversion, or how we make decisions can really set us up for success at work.

I earned a master's in organizational development and leadership several years ago. I became certified as a Myers Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI, practitioner. And since then, I've been working as a leadership coach to help individuals who have a natural preference for introversion to tap into their strengths so that they can be more effective and move into leadership roles at work.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Stacy, you are the perfect guest for us today for our topic, which is introverts in the workplace. And how to most effectively manage and motivate employees that are introverts. But let's start with some definitions to ground our discussion. What are the characteristics of an introvert? And how is an introvert different from an extrovert?

**Stacey Chazin:**

That's a great place to start. Because I think the definitions of introvert and extrovert might surprise a lot of people, including what the words introversion and extroversion don't mean. I'll start with some basic terminology. First, when we talk about introversion or extroversion, we technically say that a person has a preference for introversion or a preference for extraversion. And this signifies that one or the other is where they are most comfortable. But it doesn't mean that they're unable to act in ways that are aligned with the opposite. When I work with my coaching clients, I illustrate this by asking them to pick up a pen with their dominant hand and sign their name. And I asked them, "How did that experience feel for you?" And they'll typically use words like mindless, easy, comfortable. And then I ask them to switch the pen into their other hand and do the same thing. And I ask them, "Now, what was that experience like?" And they'll use words like awkward, uncomfortable, "I couldn't do it as well as I did it with my other hand." And that's a great way to describe introversion versus extroversion.

Your typical comfy default place is the characteristics and preferences associated with introversion, but you are able to act in ways that are more associated with what an extrovert is, here and there or when it's needed. But for the purposes of today's discussion, we can simply call people introverts and extroverts.

In the world of Myers Briggs, which some folks might know, it's the most widely used personality test in the world and the source of most of what we know today about how introverts and extroverts are wired so to speak. Introversion or extroversion refers to how a person tends to direct and receive energy.

Real briefly, extroverts like to focus on the outside world. They direct their energy and attention outwardly and they tend to be energized by interacting with others and taking action. Some of their characteristics are they work out ideas by talking through them. We might say they think out loud. They learn best by doing. And they tend to be sociable and expressive.

In contrast, introverts prefer to focus on their own inner world. They direct their energy and attention inwardly. And they tend to be energized by reflecting on their own and others' ideas, experiences, memories even. Some characteristics are – I'll say we, because I'm proudly among them, we prefer to communicate in writing. We work out our ideas by reflecting on them in our minds rather than speaking out loud. We focus in depth on a few interests. And we tend to be more private.

Before we leave the definitional discussion, I do want to flag some myths I think are important to dispel here. Myths about introverts. Not speaking up in a meeting, which many introverts are guilty of, does not mean that introverts don't have expertise or ideas. But they're actually leaning into their introverted strength of thinking deeply. They're not arrogant, or aloof, or antisocial, or shy. And the biggest one that I try to dispel and help my clients to prove false is that they're not strong leaders. When, in fact, introverts have many powerful and unique gifts that set them up to be leaders, it's just not what's typically recognized in many workplaces. And they sometimes don't feel comfortable advocating for themselves and demonstrating those leadership skills in environments that typically don't highlight and reward them.

**Evan Gibbs:**

Very interesting.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Yeah. Really is. Evan, why don't you pull in our first introvert character? And then we can talk some more.

**Evan Gibbs:**

Yeah. Yeah, of course. As regular listeners of the podcast know, we usually – well, we always use a TV show or a movie to base our discussions around. Today, we're going to do it a little different. We usually just use one TV show or movie. But we actually identified several TV show characters that we think sort of exemplify the term introvert. We're going to start *with Spider-Man*. In this clip, there are several reporters who are trying to convince Jonah Jameson, the

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editor-in-chief of the Daily Bugle, the newspaper in *Spider-Man* world, that Spider-Man is a hero and not a menace. Let's check out the clip.

[CLIP BEGIN]

**Jameson:**

Who is Spider-Man? He's a criminal. That's who he is. A vigilante. A public menace. What's he doing on my front page?

**Brant:**

Mr. Jameson, your wife is on line one. She needs to know....

**Hoffman:**

Mr. Jameson there's a page six problem....

**Jameson:**

We have a page one problem. Shut up.

**Hoffman:**

Right.

**Jameson:**

Well.

**Robertson:**

He's news.

**Hoffman:**

They're really important clients, they can't wait.

**Jameson:**

They're about to.

**Robertson:**

He pulled six people off that subway car.

**Jameson:**

Yeah, from a wreck he probably caused. Something goes wrong, and this creepy crawler is there. Look at that. He's fleeing the scene. What's that tell you?

**Robertson:**

He's not fleeing. He's probably going to save somebody else. He's a hero.

**Jameson:**

Then why does he wear a mask? What's he got to hide?

**Brant:**

She just needs to know if you want the chintz or the chenille in the dining room.

**Jameson:**

Whichever one's cheaper.

**Hoffman:**

Mr. Jameson, it's like this. We double booked page six, see, so both Macy's and Conway both have three quarters at the same time.

**Robertson:**

We sold out four printings.

**Jameson:**

Sold out?

**Robertson:**

Every copy.

**Jameson:**

Tomorrow morning – Spider-Man. Page one with a decent picture this time. Move Conway to page seven. Make it page eight and give him 10% off. Ah, make it 5%.

**Hoffman:**

That can't be done.

**Jameson:**

Get out of here.

**Robertson:**

Problem is, we don't have a decent picture. Eddie's been on it for weeks. We can barely get a glimpse of him.

**Jameson:**

Aww, what is he, shy? If we can get a picture of Julia Roberts in a thong, we can certainly get a picture of this weirdo. Put an ad on the front page. Cash money for a picture of Spider-Man. He doesn't want to be famous, then I'll make him infamous!

[CLIP END]

**Evan Gibbs:**

In real life, introverts, they find it challenging to showcase their achievement in a lot of cases, I believe. And I think that's one thing that you alluded to just a minute ago, Stacey. Are there ways for them to do so without feeling just completely uncomfortable and sort of out of place?

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah. I call that the ick factor. How can introverts promote themselves and highlight their accomplishments in ways that don't make them feel like they need to run and hide under the covers afterwards? A typical extrovert is more comfortable speaking up immediately, advocating, showing folks, "Here's what I've done. Here's how I contributed." Whereas introverts are a little more reserved in that way and are less comfortable doing that in front of a big room of people.

What I talk to my clients about is doing that that in a way promoting yourself, promoting your accomplishments in ways not only that are comfortable for you, but that actually tap into your strengths as an introvert.

For example, introverts tend to be more analytic. And they like to rely on data when they're building a case for something. And they like to have the time to pull that data together. I would say for introverts, pulling together, building the case of their accomplishments, building the case for a promotion in writing is a way that's going to tap into their strengths. Doing that in a one-on-one situation with a manager or a boss. Looking at the long game. Not just highlighting, "Here's what I did last week." But taking a look at the complete picture of their accomplishments and their contributions over time and pulling that into a narrative when they're building that case. Introverts tend to be very good storytellers, which is due in part to the fact that many of us really like to read.

Over our lifetimes, we've read a lot of beautiful narratives. And so, we're typically good crafting and telling narratives ourselves. When you have the opportunity to tap into that storytelling piece of it, it's a way to highlight yourself, highlight your contributions in a way that doesn't say, "Look at me. Look at me." Because we don't like the spotlight to be on us typically as well, but tells the longer story of contributions made to a team, a project, or an organization.

**Tracey Diamond:**

I'm kind of curious, did introverts fare better or worse than extroverts in the sort of pandemic and post-pandemic workplace where we rely so much more on technology in terms of Team meetings and Zoom meetings than sort of in-person, big group conference rooms?

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**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah. I don't have data on that handy. But what my instinct tells me and what I've read anecdotally is that it's a mixed bag. Certainly, not having to go into an office and interact with people day-in and day-out is aligned with introversion. I know that for me, being at home, not having to travel as much and face people in an office, was energizing. Because I wasn't dealing with that day-in, day-out energy sap that often comes when you have those social demands of an in-person workplace.

What I will say is I'll say two things. One, the burnout that often comes, the energy depletion, which can lead to burnout over time, can also occur when you're on Zoom. When I have a day where I have back-to-back Zoom calls, I would say I'm not equally as depleted as I would have been if were in-person meetings. But it still takes its toll, because you're needing to be on and you're needing to focus in ways that you didn't used to.

One of the things I've read research on is that being on Zoom has made it harder for many introverts to communicate. Because for introverts, picking up on non-verbal cues is a big part of how we listen and how we communicate with others. When you're seeing someone in a 2x2-inch two in box or even smaller at times, you lose a lot of those physical in-person nonverbal cues that you previously had.

**Evan Gibbs:**

Yeah. I think I definitely buy into that. I have a lot of the introvert characteristics. It really drains me to interact a lot. For me, Zoom calls are more draining than in-person meetings. And I don't know it's the ability to sort of move around, and see people, and like get up, and grab a drink. And it feels like when I'm doing Zoom, you're like kind of tethered in spot and you have to be – you're so focused that it feel – it feels like if you're off-camera, if you're standing over here shuffling papers or something, it's almost like rude. And so, you've got to be on the entire time. As opposed to like if you're in a meeting, it's okay if you're looking at your notepad, or doodling, or whatever. That there's a little way to sort of disengage.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah. I have read that one of the strategies for preventing Zoom burnout for introverts or extroverts is to turn off your camera for a couple of your meetings when it's okay to do so and not having that pressure of needing to manage your facial expressions, or sit still, or not doodle. That will take some of that pressure off and help with that energy drain.

**Evan Gibbs:**

Yeah. Personally, the other day, I had a call with somebody. I went into my calendar and I was trying to find the Zoom link and I realized it was like an old-fashioned conference call. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh." And I got on the call, I was like, "Man, this is great. I really miss conference calls." It's great for certain things. But for a lot, it's like, man, I want to go back to just regular phone calls.

**Tracey Diamond:**

It's funny, because I think regular phone calls, it feels okay to not be on camera. But if you're on a Zoom or a Teams meeting and you're off camera and you just see the person's box, it feels like you're not as engaged as you could be. The feeling of it is different. Yeah.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah. For sure.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Pulling us back to our Spider-Man character, Jonah Jameson, the editor of the Daily Bugle, seems to me – Stacey, correct me if I'm wrong. But he seems to me to be a real extrovert. And he certainly seems to be a bully. I think we can agree on that. How can an introvert best deal with a boss who's an extrovert?

**Stacey Chazin:**

That's a great question. I think that if you were an introvert and have an extroverted boss or manager, the most important thing is to communicate with your manager what you need as an introvert to be successful. I think an introvert can be successful in any type of environment. The most important thing is to communicate and advocate for what you need for that to be so.

And so, for introverts, for example, that could mean not having back-to-back meetings all day, whether they're on Zoom or in-person. Because you typically will need that time to recharge. It could mean wanting time to respond to a query or request in writing so that you have the time to give it the thoughtfulness that you need not only not to burn you out, but so that you can produce your best work. Because you typically will not produce your best ideas, do your best work when you need to do it on the fly.

And I do want to take a breath here just to call out that I've been saying typically and tend to a lot, and that's because none of these are hard and fast rules that apply to everyone introverted nor to everyone who's introverted all the time. They're preferences and more comfortable places.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Well, actually, that brings us to a next question that has been sort of my burning question, because I see pieces of introversion and extroversion in myself. And so, bringing us back to our character, Peter Parker and Spider-Man are really the same person. And Peter Parker strikes me as an introvert. Whereas Spider-Man seems to be more of an extrovert. Is it once an introvert always an introvert? Or can an individual be an introvert in certain situations and an extrovert in other situations?

**Stacey Chazin:**

I think yes and kind of yes to both your questions. Typically, the way you're wired is the way you're wired. If you are an introvert, you are an introvert. What's going to be different is how you



express that introversion in different situations. There will be times, for example, when you are in a ballroom at a conference with 300 people and you know that part of your job is to make connections for your firm, for your employer. And that involves networking, of course. That's what we're talking about. And for an extrovert, that could mean working the room, collecting 100 business cards, setting up 30 coffees over the course of the next six months. But for you as an introvert, that is not going to work. You're going to want to figure out two things. One, how can I lean into that extroverted space of 300 people in this room, but in a way that respects and taps into my introversion?

One suggestion I give folks is, when you're trying to network like that, is identify three people you want to meet ahead of time. Research them. Find out about them, which is another strength of introverts. Find them in the room and have deeper, more meaningful conversations, which can actually lead to potentially more likely to be successful follow-up.

There are going to be situations when you need to lean into it. There are going to be situations when you need to be more outgoing and engaging with people throughout one given day because of a meeting you're at, a presentation you're giving. Any type of situation. But what you want to be mindful of is that you give yourself time to recharge. And that over time, the types of things you're engaging, in the activities, the tasks, the roles that, on balance, they are going to fuel your energy more than drain your energy as an introvert. But we all need to be able to build and flex that – even if you're an introvert, build and flex that extrovert muscle so that you can function in society.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Right. Exactly. That's exactly what I was just thinking. Function in society. I also think your tip about researching three people ahead of time and zooming in on them in a big meeting is really a great idea for all folks, whether they're introverts or extroverts. It's probably much more meaningful than gathering a hundred business cards. If anybody even carries business cards these days.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yep.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Evan, you want to ask the next one?

**Evan Gibbs:**

Yeah. We'll, talk about our next clip here. And this one is from – we've used this movie before. But there's just so much great content from this movie for our podcast. It's *Office Space*, a cult classic. If you haven't seen it, you should drop what you're doing and go watch it. But in this particular clip, Milton, one of the best characters of the movie, he's already had his desk moved several times. And he's about to be told that he needs to move one more time. Let's take a listen to this classic clip.

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[BEGIN CLIP]

**Milton:**

I don't care if they lay me off either, because I told, I told Bill that if they move my desk one more time then, then I'm, then I'm quitting, I'm going to quit. And I told Dom, too, because they've moved my desk four times already this year, and I used to be over by the window, and I could see the squirrels and they were married, but then they switched, see....

**Lumbergh:**

Hi Milton. What's Happening? Milton, we're going to need to go ahead and move you downstairs into storage B.

**Milton:**

No, I, I was told I could...

**Lumbergh:**

We, ah, have some new people coming in and we need all the space we can get.

**Milton:**

But there's no space....

**Lumbergh:**

So if you could just go ahead and pack up your stuff and move it down there, that would be terrific.

**Milton:**

I, I was--

**Lumbergh:**

Okay?

**Milton: --**

told I could stay.... Excuse me. I believe you have my stapler.

[END CLIP]

**Evan Gibbs:**

Stacy, the introverts, do they find it harder to stick up for themselves in the workplace? I mean, based on what you've told us so far, I mean, it sounds like for sure. I guess has that been your experience with your clients?

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**Stacey Chazin:**

I'd say that they find it harder to do so in a way that's the extrovert ideal. The extrovert ideal is a phrase coined by Susan Cain, who's a prolific writer and researcher on the topic of introversion. And it's the idea that most workplaces and expectations of work are designed with extroverts in mind. It's going to be more difficult, I'd say, for them to advocate for themselves on the spot and even verbally, which is the way that extroverts would typically do it. But they can be just as effective, if not more so. Going back to my theme that you may have picked up on, and that's leaning into their introverted strengths.

Here, that could be giving thought to the reasoning behind their case and collecting data to support it, crafting their argument in writing. Or perhaps verbally, but in a one-on-one situation. Not in front of other people. I think a great example of this in a place where introverts need to step up for themselves is when we think about preventing burnout. Burnout, which can happen when, day-in and day-out, you're having this depletion of your energy because your job or your tasks are not aligning with who you are as an introvert. You could perhaps craft a memo to your manager talking about your bandwidth, talking about your commitment to the team, to a project.

If your manager comes to you, for example, and says – and announces at a staff meeting. Let's say, "Stacey, you're going to be taking on this new project." And you're thinking to yourself, "I don't have time to do this. This is not aligned with my skill set." And your anxiety starts to bubble up a little bit.

In that moment, speaking up is probably not going to give you the best results. But if you come back to your manager either one-on-one or in writing and say, "I want to share with you what my current workload is, the current demands on my time. I'm committed to producing excellent work in all that I do. And I worry that if I take on what you're asking me to do, the quality of my work is going to suffer." And, ideally, you could also respond with an alternate solution for the staffing need.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Stacey, you've mentioned a couple of times sort of tips on how an introvert can speak up and let their manager know what they need, and also identify themselves as an introvert to their managers. I have to imagine, that's pretty challenging for introverts where they haven't done that. From the manager's point of view, how can a manager identify when one of their employees is an introvert or an extrovert, so that they could best support them?

**Stacey Chazin:**

I think, first and foremost, being aware of what introverted behavior and introverts typically look like. I think that's very important training for managers. If you're aware without even knowing that word, or without your employee, or team member naming, saying that word introvert, if you see that you have a team member who tends to thrive more when they work by themselves, when they have time to recharge between meetings. To pay attention to those dynamics. And I think any manager, any good manager, when you have a team of people, you're aware of what makes your folks tick. When are they doing their best work? Whether it's the type of work or the circumstances under which they're doing that work. I think paying attention to that and knowing

what an introvert looks like. As a manager, you can then tune into the type of support you need to provide to them to help them to thrive.

The other piece that some organizations do is complete a Myers Briggs assessment. My lightbulb really went off when an organization I was working for about 15 years ago had a all do an MBTI assessment and brought in a facilitator to have the whole room discuss what does it mean to be an introvert or an extrovert.

And as an example – and looking at all four dimensions of Myers Briggs, as an example, he had folks separate into two groups. Introverts on this side of the room. Extroverts on that side of the room. And asked us each, "Okay, introverts, what do you want the extroverts to know about how you work best? Or what they do that makes you feel drained?" And the extroverts did the same thing. And it was a really amazing thing and a really eye-opening and productive exercise for people to learn about others who they're working with.

I know for me, when I met people who had completely opposite MBTI letters than I did, I realized, "Oh, that's why you drive me crazy." Right? Because we're just approaching things differently. And it's not that they're lazy, or not disciplined, or too creative, or this, or that. It's that we all approach things through different lenses based on how we're wired. And I like to say that the beauty is in the alphabet soup on a team. You want to have people who have a mix of letters.

I will say that, as a note, ethically, if you have employees do a Myers Briggs type assessment, they do not have to share their report with you as a manager, as an HR organization. But when you do, you can get their permission to do that. And when you do exercises like that, it can naturally come out.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Yeah. I would just also caution from a legal compliance perspective. One concern I would have is if a manager gets that information, even though being an introvert or an extrovert is not a protected category under the law, it does sort of give you personal information about an employee that you can't sort of unring the bell once you know that information. And if you then act in a sort of adverse way towards employees based on some personal attribute, you could get yourself into some hot water. Some caution there.

Our last clip is about another favorite introvert, Sheldon from *The Big Bang Theory*. I've actually been wanting to do a *Big Bang Theory* episode for a long time now, because there's so much fodder in that show. In this particular clip, Sheldon is asked to give a speech at a conference.

[BEGIN CLIP]

**Sheldon:**

All right. Thank you. Problem.

**Raj:**

What?

**Sheldon:**

They expect me to give a speech at the banquet? I can't give a speech.

**Raj:**

Well, no. You're mistaken. You give speeches all the time.

**Sheldon:**

I'm perfectly comfortable speaking to small groups. I cannot speak to large crowds.

[END CLIP]

**Tracey Diamond:**

Stacey, are introverts just not suited to public speaking? Or is this something they can learn to get past?

**Stacey Chazin:**

I love this question, because this is a huge myth about introverts that I'm really happy to dispel. First, I will share that about three-quarters of all people, regardless of introversion or extroversion, struggle with or are afraid of public speaking. Second, and I think this will surprise many of your listeners, public speaking is extremely well-aligned with introversion. And here's why. One, introverts prefer to speak when they have something well-thought-out and substantive to say.

And in most cases, in advance of any presentation, a presenter spends time pulling together information, creating slides and crafting a compelling case or report, whatever it is they're sharing. They have time to prepare and to do that in ways that align with their introverted strengths.

Two, and this is a big one, when you're up on a stage presenting to a group, especially a large one you, do not have to make small talk. Think about that. In fact, casual impromptu conversation is rarely part of the gig. Another reason that introverts tend to actually excel at presenting is that we're natural storytellers, which I mentioned earlier. Most introverts, because we love to read and we're also highly creative, this sets us up to share powerful anecdotes or analogies when we're presenting, which I think many people would agree is often the most engaging or compelling part of a presentation.

And lastly, when an introvert presents to a group of people who know her and have experienced her introversion in other settings, the fact that she's there shining on the stage as a presenter I think really captures their attention and can begin to shift what they think about that person in terms of their leadership and communication style.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Not only do introverts like public speaking, but it's actually good for them, because it shows them in a whole another light.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yeah.

**Tracey Diamond:**

So interesting. I feel like I'm learning a lot about myself during this episode.

**Stacey Chazin:**

Right? Yeah. I know for me, I really enjoy presenting. And I recently learned about that piece of one of the reasons that aligns with us, is because we don't have to engage in the small talk. And I thought, absolutely, that makes perfect sense.

**Tracey Diamond:**

Last question for you, are there certain communication techniques that managers should use with introverts as opposed to extroverts?

**Stacey Chazin:**

Yes. As we talked about earlier, because introverts prefer to have time to digest information, to find data, to go deep in terms of their thoughts before responding to something, communicating.

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